

My name is Ann Stevenson. I have been married to my husband Brady 17 years. When he said 'for better or worse, in sickness and health', he had no idea what he was getting himself into. We have a 13 year old son with ADHD and food allergies and a 15 year old daughter with an attitude. I am 44 years old and expect to live for at least 40 more. (My grandparents lived well into their 80's.) I have Multiple Sclerosis. I believe that all human life deserves to be treated with dignity. To maintain my integrity, I must reject any treatment derived from human embryos.

I was diagnosed with MS in 1993. I work very hard at trying to maintain function. I took one or another of the MS medications for most of the last 13 years, which means that I have given myself shots on a weekly, daily or every other day schedule ~~for~~. Sometimes the needles were short, sometimes they were long. My basement and van are known as "Ann's medical supply warehouses" due to the wheelchair, walkers, canes and shower chairs that are stored there. I work out at least once a week. I try to eat right. I take vitamins. I have spent thousands of dollars trying to find a cure. The cost of all of this is ~~pretty~~ high. But I will not use medication derived from embryos – the price is too high. It's not just the financial cost, as much as it is the cost of lost integrity.

The loss of independence and freedom to move about at will have been the most painful losses. I cannot go anywhere unassisted. I need help to get groceries or to a doctor's appointment. Some days I can't even dress myself. <sup>I</sup> I hate the summer time because the heat makes me worse. A cooling vest with ice packs in it is my summer uniform. Taking a shower can wipe me out for hours. I'm not crazy about the winter either because it's slippery. There are usually a *few* good days in the spring and fall that I don't struggle because of the weather. I don't know where I could realistically live that would suit me weather-wise. But I'm not moving anyway – my family is here.

Right now I am at a very unpredictable place. I can stand – but not for long. I can walk – but not far. My ability to get around varies throughout the day. I often am unable to write. I have spasticity in my legs that has caused me to actually kick the stranger sitting next to me and keeps me awake at night. Sometimes it is difficult even to sit up unsupported. Day to day and hour to hour I am unable to predict what I will and won't be able to do. *Pain Everyday*

I feel pretty defenseless. If someone wanted to hurt me or take the few dollars in my pocket, I would be an easy mark. The only way I have to defend myself is with my voice. It has been said that the unborn are the most defenseless of the defenseless – probably because they have no voice of their own. I figure the defenseless – the disabled and the unborn -- need to stick together. Because if one of us is exploited or abused, exploitation or abuse of the other won't be far behind.

Have we forgotten the lessons of history learned when human 'experimentation' had been tolerated? Experimenting on human embryos is reminiscent of those atrocities. I want no part of it. Instead of destroying the little people in Petri dishes, we should be trying to find families for them like the Snowflake babies. Maybe it will be one of those children that will grow up to find a cure for MS. If we don't let them live, we'll never know what we have missed. My life and dignity are very important to me. ***There is nothing I want more than to be able to live a normal, functional life.*** But not at the cost of someone else's life.

*embryos  
adopted  
by hopeful  
couples*

A sage of our times, Dr. Seuss, stated it very well in his classic book that most children familiar with. In ***Horton Hears a Who***, Horton the elephant, without benefit of magnifying glass or microscope, recognizes the dignity of those too small to be seen. Even he knows that "a person's a person, no matter how small." We should all be so wise.

*Human life at every stage  
is NOT a commodity.*